

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE RESERVISTS

I CANNOT RESIST commenting upon the double editorial, "The Unhappy GIs" [SR, Jan. 6], by your staff members H.A.S. and N.C., because it displays an especially disheartening shortcoming on the part of N.C. I sympathize completely with the editor's concern for the preservation of human dignity and the right of the individual in a free society to criticize the government. However, H.A.S.'s editorial nowhere states or implies that he does not equally share this concern; in fact, I strongly suspect that he does.

But where H.A.S. discusses the reluctance of some reservists to accept their responsibility, together with possible effects upon national morale, N.C. counters with examples of brutality in Army training, an important but obviously irrelevant subject. Where H.A.S. discusses the irresponsible manner in which the press is exaggerating the complaints of "a disgruntled few," N.C. brings up the issue of the freedom of the press, a related but different matter, since to urge responsibility is not to deny freedom. Such departures from the ordinary rules of logic are both irritating and embarrassing, since I think highly of SR and often recommend it to friends. Assertions that are valid *per se* lose much of their force when presented in a framework of sloppy logic. . . .

HOWARD GREENSTEIN.

Stanford, Calif.

I AGREE WITH N.C. to the letter. I served my country in the U.S. Army and know from experience that many, many instances of brutality and injustice occur during an enlisted man's military days.

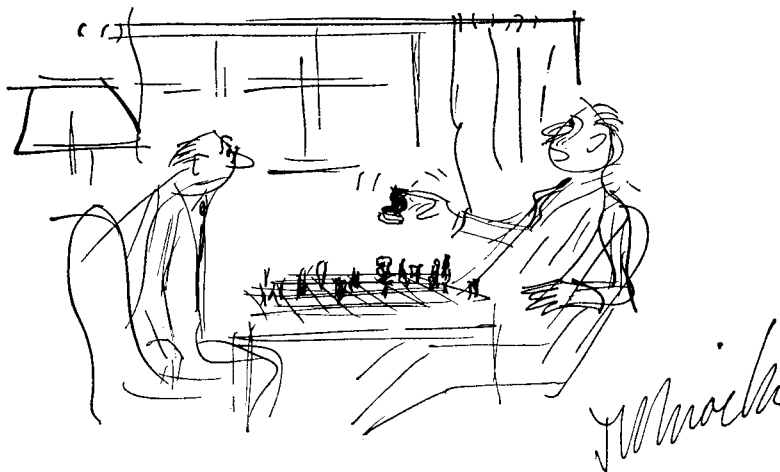
Ruthless non-coms seemed about as obvious as ever during the three years I was a member of the military forces. I won't go into detail with numerous examples of brutality and sadism, but I will say that our modern army is also suffering from a very serious case of unscreened officers and non-coms who operate much like gangsters toward the unfortunate ranks of enlisted men who are thrown to the wolves as a matter of practice on being drafted. . . .

ALFRED E. RATHMANN.

Manitowoc, Wis.

IT WAS GOOD to see H.A.S.'s clear-cut rebuttal to the reservist grippers and the newspapers that have capitalized on their complaints.

But what the editorial fails to mention and what the newspapers have largely ignored is the Army's display of inhumanity to the reservists with severe family problems. There are many men on active duty who would never have been called in the event of war. In one unit alone a man's wife is dying of cancer, another's motherless child is in the hands of sick and elderly grandparents, two others have wives who are seriously ill and unable to



care for the children alone. Despite the urgency of these and other cases, the applications of the men for hardship discharges are treated to the usual red tape and then, weeks later, rejected.

There may have been just and sufficient reasons for the call-up but there can be no excuse for the military's callous disregard of the agony it has caused in many homes.

A REACTIVATED RESERVIST.

Fort Bragg, N.C.

CONGRATULATIONS TO H.A.S. for his powerful "A Familiar Cry." It's about time we began examining the motives behind the rash of newspaper articles labeled the "truth" about the big Reserve build-up. Freedom of the press is not license to knowingly mislead the public.

In a recent nationally syndicated column carried by a New York paper an article "exposed" a so-called lack of concern toward an ill reservist. Unfortunately the article was written without bothering to question the officers involved, the patient's family, his doctor (myself)—or even to interview the patient, who never knew of the reporter and had, in fact, been evacuated to Walter Reed Hospital a week before the alleged incidents took place. Why? The story had been created as a joke by a group of imaginative New York City reservists in the midst of a volleyball game and accepted by a reporter more interested in hot copy for home town readers than in the defense of his country.

(Capt.) ROBERT M. VIDAVER, MC,
U.S. Army Reserve.
Augusta, Ga.

N.C.'s WORRY OVER Marines getting whacked on the feet and a soldier having to eat a love letter are good samples of atypical life in the military. Nobody condones it. It happens so rarely it's news.

During the recent holidays a reservist stationed at an army camp came home and offered a new kind of complaint. He told me that everybody is too nice in his out-

fit. "The company commander doesn't give us orders to do a thing," he said. "He asks us if we have time to do it."

"Doesn't the captain have lieutenants who can give direct orders?" I asked.

The reservist explained that the company has two lieutenants, but they are equally unanxious to offend and eager to please the men.

"How about the first sergeant? What does he do?"

"He doesn't want to make anybody mad. He's about like the others," said the reservist. . . .

PETE IVEY.

Chapel Hill, N.C.

HURRAH FOR H.A.S. and his editorial "A Familiar Cry." N.C. has no conception of what is involved in training a soldier. His examples of "senseless brutality" would provoke derisive laughter from the "rats" (freshman cadets) at VMI, George C. Marshall's alma mater, not to mention Marine "boots," etc. After all, these men are not being trained for the Peace Corps. They are being trained to protect their country by killing its enemies if necessary, preferably without being killed themselves. It's a tough, mean, heartless, and sometimes thankless job.

I don't think Washington or Lee would appreciate the way in which N.C. used their names to bolster his "reply." How much sympathy would these tough-minded men have for the whinings of the trainees? It was Washington, remember, who forced an army to freeze at Valley Forge because he knew that if they went home for the winter they wouldn't come back. Lee sent one of the most superb infantry units of all time to almost certain death at Gettysburg in the belief that their training and blind devotion to him would prevail over massed Yankee cannon.

Not "sadists," N.C., but soldiers, without whom you and I would be denied the privilege of writing these epistles.

HOWARD L. SMITH, M.D.

Marlin, Tex.



Edited by Martin Levin

AUTOGRAPH PARTY

The salesgirl piles the books in
neat alignment

Upon the table one last time,
and sighs, "So there!"

How reassuring that they're on
consignment.

The buyer thinks, and curls a
lock of hair.

The author comes, shakes hands,
and with a flourish

Signs all the copies (five) the
clerks have bought.

On one of them, his pen becoming
furrish,

He leaves, with name and best
regards, a blot.

Two hours drag past, and although
there are plenty

Who come to chat, few buy.
(For one he signed

A card.) Then he, enriched three
dollars twenty,

Departs—and leaves his fountain
pen behind.

—RICHARD ARMOUR.

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THE ESKIMO

THE average Eskimo is actually below average. He is descended from Mongols. What happened is, a few thousand years ago a large group of Mongols traveled up the east coast of Asia on their way north to avoid somebody . . . maybe the Chinese. They crossed the Bering Strait into this continent, turned south and went on to become Aztecs and Incas. But a few of them got off at the North Pole and became Eskimos. The Eskimos more or less stuck together and kept the language going for awhile but it didn't hold up. For one thing they no longer needed the word "Chinese," and even "Mongol" went out of style. Then they had to make up a lot of new ones such as *kayak*, *igloo*, *husky*, etc.

The Eskimos let all the "weather" words go by the board except for "worse" and "frightful."

After a few thousand years there wasn't much language left because where they lived there's not much to talk about. Eskimo has no word for

fruit-cup, or Pennsylvania, or motorcycle. They don't discuss Krishna Menon or psitticosis. They spend no time whatsoever on Modigliani, syzygy, Dear Abby, yams, emeralds, or ping-pong.

The Incas and the Aztecs went to a nice warm climate where they had plenty to eat and the living was easy and they haven't been heard of in five hundred years.

Eskimos aren't terribly bright but walruses don't learn either. There are also the seal, the sea lion, whale, and common cold, but the Eskimo never catches the common cold.

When the New York Yankees win the Series and announce they are the champions of the world, this does not necessarily include the Eskimos.

An Eskimo will lend you his wife. Even in their limited language it gives them something to talk about.

No Eskimo has ever eaten a banana.

—HENRY MORGAN.

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WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF NOTHING

LATELY I've noticed that positive thinking is passé as a system of personal happiness. The pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. The new trend is negative in outlook—a kind of non-living. These days it's what you *don't* do that makes you happy. It's what you don't have that gives you a thrill and a sense of freedom.

This is how non-living works. Say you're taking a vacation trip. You book a non-stop flight to Rome (no dull landings in Paris or London where the hydraulic fluid might give out). You travel with no time limit, no jet surcharge, no passport, no visa. You

take with you a camera that needs no focusing, no winding, no adjusting for light. Your travel wardrobe requires no ironing. In case you have trouble sleeping in a Roman bed, you pack a bottle of sleeping pills that will cause no drug habit and no drug hangover. For waking up you take with you a no cord, no wind electronic transistor clock. When you sit back at the end of your trip and contemplate all the things you didn't do and didn't have, you know you must have enjoyed yourself.

The other day I was in the kitchen counting my blessings. I felt 100 per cent more optimistic after looking at my no drip lip bleach bottle, my no stick frying pan, my no hands, self-lowering toaster, my shelves lined with "No Bugs Milady" paper, and my frost-free refrigerator filled with non-fat milk, no cholesterol, non-hydrogenated margarine, and no-cal beverages in no deposit, no return bottles. True, we've sunk a pretty penny in all these no's, but then even non-living costs money.

Knowing this, American manufacturers are pushing the crusade for happiness by elimination full stop ahead. They have given the women non-smear lipstick, no snag, no run stockings, reducing systems requiring no diets, no drugs, and no exercises, the no neutralizer home permanent, and now their ultimate triumph, the no seam bra.

For the men they have come up with no stitch wallets, no stay shirt collars, no nicotine, no tar cigarettes, no taste, no smell vodka (if it produces a headache, take an aspirin which does not upset the stomach), non-pleated pants with no cuffs, and no lube cars with tubeless tires. Who could ask for anything less?

Even tiny babies have not been overlooked. For them there is the pinless diaper—no pins, no buttons, no hooks, no snaps. (Its fastener is gummed plastic, in case you're curious. But who cares what it *is*? It's what it *isn't* that counts.)

The passion for nothingness is also raging in the arts. Authors are producing non-books which are being eagerly devoured by non-readers from coast to coast. Every poet of stature is giving us poetry with no meter and no rhyme. Painting is non-objective. Music is atonal. In the theatre plays are being produced which have no plots and practically no characters. A recent success featured only one actor and a non-magnetic tape recorder.

The trend is well on its way. I don't know where it will end, but I suspect that, with the full cooperation of the Russians and their *nyet*, the ultimate in non-living may be just around the corner.

—MARGARET BENNETT.

